

Harmonic Spectrum BAFTA win!

A documentary film showcasing a talented autistic pianist has won a prestigious Scottish BAFTA award.

Harmonic Spectrum, which features Sean Logan, was awarded the distinguished honour in the Short Film & Animation category at the star-studded BAFTA Scotland Awards on 20 November 2021.

The film focuses on Sean, a talented musician using the piano to navigate life on the autism spectrum. As he is drawn into new musical collaborations, he must learn to balance his enthusiasm and compulsive energy with understanding and compromise, redefining his artistic perspective.

The documentary short has been shown at

several film festivals throughout the UK. Having already gained Best Short Documentary at the Scottish Mental Health Arts Festival and the Optical Sound Award at the Flatpack Film Festival, the BAFTA win is the film's most high-profile honour to date.

Sean Logan, who stars in *Harmonic Spectrum*, said: "I hope that the legacy of this film focuses on what art can mean for people on the spectrum. Music is a therapeutic tool for people like me. It connects me to people, music is something that brings people together.

"Help is out there for autistic people like me, and by using those tools, I've succeeded. However, we need to ensure that people have access to those tools, because loads

of people are still struggling.

"We're really coming into a great time for people on the spectrum, as autism is being understood and identified a lot more now, and by 2050, who's to say that neurodiversity won't be the norm?"

Rob Holland, Acting Director of the National Autistic Society Scotland, said: "We're delighted to see *Harmonic Spectrum*

receiving a Scottish BAFTA award, as it represents an important step in raising awareness of the lives and experiences of autistic people.

"The depiction of autistic people in film and TV has often been from the perspective of non-autistic people and in many cases has compounded myths and assumptions. This film flips that, putting Sean's voice and his music at the heart of the story."



Harmonic Spectrum star Sean Logan

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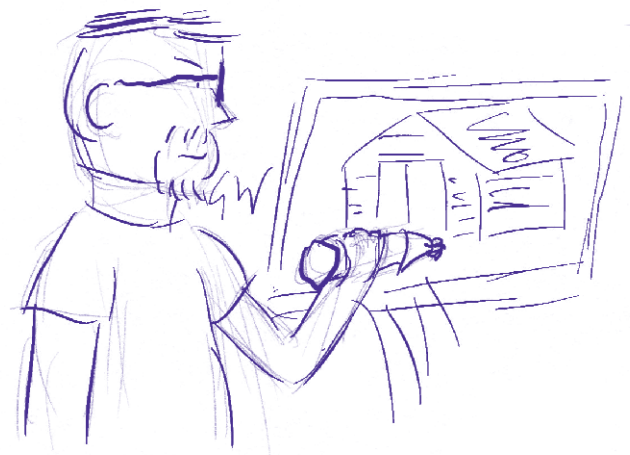
FROM OUR EDITOR

These past couple of years have not been great in general. However, the forced quarantines have given all of us some time to think. Thinking about everything – the economy, the environment, the point of celebrities, mental health, etc. It's like humanity was finally forced to take a time out and reflect on themselves. Many never had that time to think before, due to society forcing them to keep busy, for whatever reason. But now that they got that time to think, they want to change things for the better, for themselves and everyone in general.

Before COVID, the only time we had to do this is new year, and we tended to only think about how to improve ourselves. Now things are different – for the better.

As for me, I plan to do more exercise (“Where have I heard that before?”) and during the summer, build a new shed in my back garden (“Haven’t heard that one before.”).

Gordon Wallace
Editor



Gordon's illustration of his future plans

NEW NORTH LANARKSHIRE BRANCH

The latest addition to our charity's branches network, the North Lanarkshire Branch, has recently been formed. The branch is run by Volunteer Chairperson Lucas Nicholson, along with fellow volunteer committee members. The committee is made up of autistic adults, teachers and parents of autistic children, and they all bring a wealth of autism knowledge and experience. The branch plans to run parent support groups, children's activities, guest speaker evenings and campaign on local issues affecting autistic people.



If you would like to find out more about this branch, or any other branch in Scotland, please email patsy.devlin@nas.org.uk

Autism and mental health conference

Our online Autism and mental health conference, focusing on the crucial issues impacting the mental health of autistic people and strategies for support, is taking place on 10 March 2022.

For more information and how to book, please visit www.autism.org.uk/autism-and-mental-health-2022

update

FROM OUR ACTING DIRECTOR

Hello everyone! My name is Rob and I am incredibly proud to be the new Acting Director of the National Autistic Society Scotland.



I am thrilled to be leading a charity which has, for more than 25 years, worked tirelessly for autistic people and their families across Scotland. I first joined the organisation in 2019 as External Affairs Manager, although I have worked for organisations supporting disabled people for more than 15 years.

I hope your year is going well so far. January may seem like a distant memory already, but I hope you are still sticking to your New Year's resolutions. If yours was to get fit, then we have the perfect opportunity for you to do so as well as supporting what we do! By signing up for the Kiltwalk on Sunday 24 April, you can don some tartan and raise funds for our vital work.

We have had some amazing successes recently, from winning Rainbow HR's Charity of the Year, to the creation of our new North Lanarkshire Branch. Additionally, *Harmonic Spectrum's* BAFTA victory is yet another positive sign of the change in attitudes towards autistic people in Scotland.

Enjoy this edition of *News and Views* which contains a roundup of all our work and thank you for your continued support for the National Autistic Society Scotland.



Rob Holland
Acting Director of National Autistic Society
Scotland

World Autism Acceptance Week

This year, we will be celebrating World Autism Acceptance Week (WAAW) between 28 March and 3 April!

We asked our supporters in November to help us plan the week, including what we call it. Based on your feedback, we're pleased to announce that we have changed the name to World Autism Acceptance Week (from World Autism Awareness Week).

A big thank you to everyone who helped us!



Our work in Parliament

We have continued with our influencing work in the Scottish Parliament. This includes an ongoing push for the Scottish Government to follow through on their promise to introduce a Commissioner for autistic people and their families.

This is looking promising with work underway to produce an *Autism, Learning Disability and Neurodiversity Bill* for consultation soon.

The Cross-Party Group (CPG) on Autism is also going from strength to strength. We provide secretariat support to the CPG, a forum where MSPs from different parties come together with organisations, along with autistic people and families, to hear about the latest developments. At the last meeting on 24 January, the group looked at the theme of transition, which we know can be challenging for many young autistic people. We were joined by Pam Duncan-Glancy MSP, who spoke about her *Transitions Bill*. The aim of this bill is to introduce a National Transitions Strategy, supporting disabled children and young people with the transition to adulthood.

Get in touch if you'd be interested in attending CPG meetings at: cpg.scotland@nas.org.uk

New Autism Inclusion Award launched

In October we launched our new Autism Inclusion Award for mainstream schools and education settings. The award recognises mainstream education services who are working hard to support and educate autistic children and young people.

Our 2018 *Not Included, Not Engaged, Not Involved* report found that more than a third (34%) of parents said that their children had been unlawfully excluded in the last two years - with almost a quarter (22%) saying this happened multiple times a week. We hope the award will help autistic people and their families to identify educational settings that go the extra mile to support their needs.

New
Inclusion
Award



You can find out more about the award and how to apply at www.autism.org.uk/autism-inclusion-award.

News from Catrine Bank

Our adult services in Ayrshire ran an exciting new jobs fayre to recruit new staff in November. The fayre included a meet and greet table, with candidates then making their way to our formal information area with all of our leaflets about our services and charity. After this, they got an introduction to autism from our team, which included a look at a number of sensory items used within our service.

They also met our service support teams who were able to inspire them, answer all of their questions and help them to fill in their applications.

We had a number of application forms filled in, and booked in interview dates with 16 potential candidates.

The conversations were rich, constructive and hopefully will leave a lasting impression on the candidates that will set us and our services apart from any other provider.

All in all, a great day and hopefully the first of many!

Autism Support Ayrshire

Our service in Ayrshire is going from strength to strength! The winter months have seen us busy with enquiries, chats, online social groups, parent/carer workshops and much more. In addition, the team are now delivering an online NAS Café, online Coffee Club as well as our new Social Navigation programme!



If you live in Ayrshire, get in touch to find out more: AyrshireOss@nas.org.uk

News from Highland



In support of our charity, Eastgate Shopping Centre in Inverness has launched a Quiet Hour initiative to assist autistic shoppers. The Centre's sensory-friendly shopping experiences take place on the first Wednesday of every month from 3-4pm.

Alison Footitt, our Information Officer for the Highlands, said: "The National Autistic Society Scotland is delighted to be supporting the Eastgate Centre with their monthly Quiet Hour. We know shopping can be very stressful for many autistic people and their families so the proposed sensory changes will make a big difference. In addition to the Quiet Hour, Eastgate staff are now more autism aware which will help shoppers throughout the week."

Our Highland information Service has also partnered with the Highland Council to create and maintain a new website for the Pines. The Pines is the Highland Council's neurodevelopmental service for children, and is an umbrella service, which includes diagnosis and support for families, and teams such as speech, language and occupational therapy.

The website includes information about autism and other neurodevelopmental conditions, ways to best support a child and printable resources such as visual timetables. There is also a wealth of video resources available, linked to the Pines YouTube channel.

The website can be accessed and used by anyone, and is available at www.thepineshighland.com

Post-Diagnostic Support Service

Our free Post-Diagnostic Support Service, delivered with several other organisations as part of Scottish Government's *Different Minds* campaign, launched in December 2020. We are delighted to say we've received further funding and it will continue to run until the end of June 2022!

The programme aims to empower young people to develop a sense of identity and belonging. At every session, participants discuss the topic of the day, and then engage in a fun activity of their choice. Each programme runs for six weeks and covers topics such as understanding autism, managing anxiety, social communication and confidence. We have received great feedback so far! The service is open to anyone living in Scotland aged 12-18 with a recent diagnosis of autism.



Social groups

Our online social groups continue to go from strength to strength with more than 150 autistic people being supported each week. We have a diverse range of groups covering lots of subjects, including film and TV, gaming, travel, politics, general chat and loads more! We have groups covering different age ranges, genders and geographic areas, so why not get in touch to find out more!

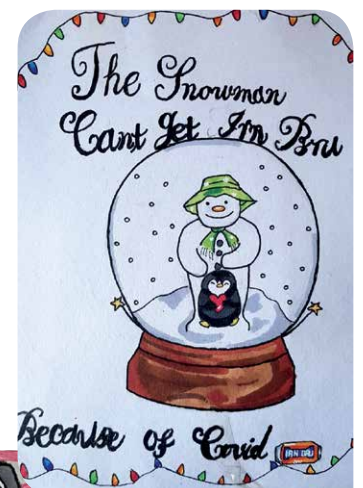
For more info on either Post-Diagnostic Support or social groups, contact:
ScotlandSocialGroups@nas.org.uk

Moving Forward+ - Lucy's story

Lucy was diagnosed as autistic at around 15 years old. Lucy has issues with her confidence - this means that she finds it very difficult to pursue things she would like to do. During secondary school, Lucy had a particularly difficult time and stopped attending. She found it hard to get the right support, but after engaging with social work, she was referred to Moving Forward+ and attended her first meeting in June.

Lucy is being supported via one-to-one online sessions, to further understand her experiences of autism and anxiety. Over time, she hopes to build confidence and become more independent, so that she can fulfil her goals. A talented artist, her main goal is to one day have her own business. She is keen to build an online presence to share and sell her artwork, with the goal of eventually being able to work on a commission basis.

Lucy was excited to hear of other Moving Forward+ participants who have gone on to fulfil their ambitions. We are delighted to be helping Lucy work towards achieving her goals and show off some of her artwork!



Some of Lucy's artwork

For more info about Moving Forward+, contact: moving.forward@nas.org.uk

Charity of the Year win!

We were delighted and honoured to be selected by Glasgow-based Rainbow HR as their Charity of the Year for 2022! We competed against four other charities for the coveted title, and won with over 1,000 votes cast for us!

As Charity of the Year, all of the money raised by Rainbow HR in 2022 will go towards supporting our social groups.

Rainbow HR will raise funds for us under the banner of "Charity Heroes". One of their many fundraising events for the year will be a lunch and auction at the Radisson Blu in Glasgow in November.

A massive thank you to everyone who voted for us!

Upcoming Kiltwalk



Some of our Kiltwalkers last year

It's back again, it's Kiltwalk time!

The walking event, which raises much-needed funds for us and so many other charities, takes place in Glasgow on 24 April.

Why not challenge yourself while doing something good for autistic people and their families!

Find out more at:

thekiltwalk.co.uk/events/glasgow



Amenah on her Spectrum Walk

Meet the fundraiser

Amenah

My name is Amenah Jumani. I am 13 years old, and I go to school in Edinburgh. I have a younger sister and three little brothers.

In my free time, I like watching TV. My favourite show is *Jurassic World Camp Cretaceous*. I also like making bracelets and accessories, and I love listening to and playing music. I play the piano and the violin.

My favourite colour is red, and I have a lot of red in my room! I love ice cream sundaes, and I like to travel.

I did the spectrum fundraising walk with my parents. We wanted to raise awareness of autism, and to raise money to help people on their autism journey.

I loved doing the walk, walking through the woods and forest. We passed a beautiful waterfall, and while crossing a stream, I fell in and got my feet wet! It was really funny.

I would like to do the walk again, maybe with more of my family and friends. It was nice being in nature, and doing something for other people.

Meet the volunteer



LYNSEY TAYLOR

Moving Forward+ Volunteer Mentor

Image: Lynsey and her
brother Stephen

Q: Who are you?

My name is Lynsey and I am 29 years old. I have always had a strong passion for others and I am currently volunteering as a mentor.

Q: Tell us more about what you do with Moving Forward+

I have been a mentor for Moving Forward+ for a year now. I mentor a boy called Cameron and he is brilliant!

Q: How did you first get involved?

I was looking for some help in getting my brother Stephen diagnosed. I was really impressed with the support the charity gave me. I then applied to become a mentor and my journey started there!

Q: Why did you consider volunteering for us?

I wanted to do more to help others in similar circumstances as my brother has faced a lot of unnecessary struggles in his life, so I was determined to help others and raise awareness.

Q: Tell us more about yourself and your brother

Abellio, the transport company, got in touch with me to ask about my mentoring as I post about it online. They wanted to be more inclusive as an employer, so I told them about my brother and they offered to do an interview. When I got the call that Stephen had been offered the role, I cried happy tears! He's doing so well at Abellio and I couldn't be prouder of him!

Q: What would you say to other people who are thinking about getting involved in volunteering for Moving Forward+?

I would say it is the most rewarding thing you could do! The feeling after volunteering is like no other and I can't recommend it enough!

Job opportunities

Do you...

- want a rewarding job that offers satisfaction, variety and flexibility?
- enjoy working with people and want to make a real difference?
- have excellent life skills that you can share?

To find out about our current vacancies and more opportunities with the National Autistic Society Scotland, please visit www.autism.org.uk/jobs or contact our HR team at scotlandHR@nas.org.uk

Are you a member of the National Autistic Society Scotland?

If not, you can join our growing community of over 1,200 people in Scotland and play a vital role in our charity's work. Our package of benefits includes our quarterly members' magazine, *Your Autism*, and discounts on our publications and events. To find out more, please call our Supporter Care team on **0808 800 1050**.

About us

The National Autistic Society Scotland is here to transform lives, change attitudes and create a society that works for autistic people.

We transform lives by providing support, information and practical advice for the 56,000 autistic adults and children in Scotland, as well as their family members and carers.

Autistic people turn to us at key moments or challenging times in their lives, be it getting a diagnosis, going to school or finding work.

We change attitudes by improving public understanding of autism and the difficulties many autistic people face.

We also work closely with businesses, local authorities and government to help them provide more autism-friendly spaces, deliver better services and improve laws.

We have come a long way but it is not good enough.

There is still so much to do to increase opportunities, reduce social isolation and build a brighter future for people on the autism spectrum. With your help, we can make it happen.